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to germinate in this, but when washed with pure water several times they germinated. These experiments suggest that perhaps fungi can be successfully combated with fungicides of far less strength than now employed.

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### BRIEFER ARTICLES.

*Oligonema*.—In my recent paper upon the new species of Mr. Pringle's last year's collection in Mexico I founded a new genus, *Oligonema*, upon a remarkable asteroid composite. I supposed that I had taken all possible pains to make sure that the name was not pre-occupied, but I have since learned through the kindness of Mr. C. F. Peck that there is a genus of the same name among the *Myxomycetes*, established by Rostafinski. As it is necessary, therefore, to make a change, I propose to substitute the meaningless name *Golionema*, formed by simply changing the position of a single letter and in some degree suggestive of the original. The new species consequently becomes *Golionema heterophyllum*.—SERENO WATSON, *Cambridge, Massachusetts*.

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### EDITORIAL.

THOSE ARE not particularly difficult questions which Professor Mac-Millan asks in "Open Letters."

The only answer to the first is, "that depends." The answer is certainly not to be found in any cast-iron rules, though the inexperienced may fondly imagine so. If we understand the problems of nomenclature they require a judicial attitude on the part of the student. He has a code of laws—doubtless imperfect; doubtless capable of improvement by the application of the two decades of experience which has been acquired since they were framed—and by the principles set forth in this code he is to be guided. In addition to the code he is to use his common sense—if he has any—in determining what name is to stand. What were the use of the judge on the bench if he have no discretion in the interpretation, application or even suspension of the law in particular cases? To say that the laws of nomenclature are to be inflexible and of universal applicability is quite as absurd as to endeavor to make civil statutes so. It would be wonderfully convenient if this could be attained, even with the law of priority, but it seems quite impossible to secure rigidity without absurdity.

THE ANSWER to the second question, which seems to be addressed to the GAZETTE, is almost self-evident. *There is no self-constituted authority.* He only can be recognized as such whose knowledge and aptitude seem to his fellows to deserve the distinction. The judge does not make himself a judge; he is called to the bench by those who think him qualified to decide nice questions. The GAZETTE recognized Dr. Engelmann as an authority on the Cactaceæ of this country. Why? Not because he proclaimed himself such, but because he knew much about these plants through wide observation and exhaustive study, coupled with a special aptitude for exact and critical research. On a general question, such as that of nomenclature, we recognize as an authority the man who has had experience in untangling its knots, and who has shown himself judicious and accurate as well as acute. We distrust an attempt by a novice, even though he is using "his best bibliographic and analytic ability" to decide the questions of nomenclature which may be raised in a list of a thousand species. But the GAZETTE will warmly welcome the effort of these "young, misguided enthusiasts" to study questions of more limited scope—even questions of nomenclature in restricted groups of plants, provided they take proper pains and time in the study.

On the other hand, good intentions, independence, and a desire to do something are not enough. The now notorious "Farmer's-Alliance judge" in Kansas 'struggled along', 'doing the best he could', 'differed from an authority' (the Supreme Court), 'honestly' (no doubt), 'submitted his efforts to the test of time and the correction of wider and abler research,' and — made himself a laughing-stock for the country! So some botanists undertake a jurist's decisions without even legal training, and the result is quite as ludicrous.

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## CURRENT LITERATURE.

### A Flora of Texas.

With the commencement of volume II, the contributions from the National Herbarium take on a new character. Hitherto we have had lists and catalogues of the plants of certain remote regions of our country, with here and there the descriptions of new species of plants these have been valuable in their way, but in the present contribution we have not only everything a list would include, but in addition a complete manual, helpful alike to the botanical student who will find in it a guide and a stimulus, and to the older botanist who has hitherto